

QUINNIPIAC UNIVERSITY

RE: HB 5390: 'An Act Repealing Statutory Provisions that Impose Liability on an individual for Repayment of Costs Incurred When the Individual was Incarcerated.'

Date: March 23, 2022

Dear respected members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Amber Kelly and I write today to voice my strong support regarding 'An Act Repealing Statutory Provisions that Impose Liability on an individual for Repayment of Costs Incurred When the Individual was Incarcerated.'

I am a Social Worker, an Associate Professor of Social Work, member of the Social Welfare Action Alliance and Sex Workers and Allies Network, and Co-Chair of the Women's Resettlement Working Group in New Haven, CT. Each of these positionalities has led me to see firsthand the many barriers to success for returning residents in our state. This Act seeks to speak to one of those barriers by eliminating the requirement that returning residents be saddled with the debt of a daily cost of their incarceration.

Research literature shows that there are clear class-based and racial disparities in arrest, sentencing, and incarceration in the state of Connecticut, just as there are in all states in the US. **When already vulnerable returning residents are expected to pay back fees associated with their confinement, they are not only less stable in rebuilding their lives and livelihoods, but they are also negatively impacted in terms of passing down intergenerational resources to their children, and thus divesting resources from a whole generation of youth already dealing with the incarceration of one of their parents.**

I have spoken personally with people unable to benefit from property and other resources passed to them when a loved one dies or when they win a lawsuit as survivors of an awful event. Instead, they are forced to liquidate these resources to pay back the state of Connecticut. **Each time the state takes resources such as these from returning CT residents, they are removing them from the next generation of residents. This sets our less resourced communities up for further divestment from residents, and fewer resources for their children.**

This legislation provides an opportunity to stop the divestment from already under resourced returning residents and their communities and provides one less barrier for someone to begin to rebuild their life post incarceration. Serving time is the sentence that one gets, not serving the intergenerational resources of their families.

Thank you for your time in reading this letter of support, and I encourage you strongly to consider how this Act supports us all in supporting healthier communities across the state of Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Amber Kelly, PhD, MSW, LCSW

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